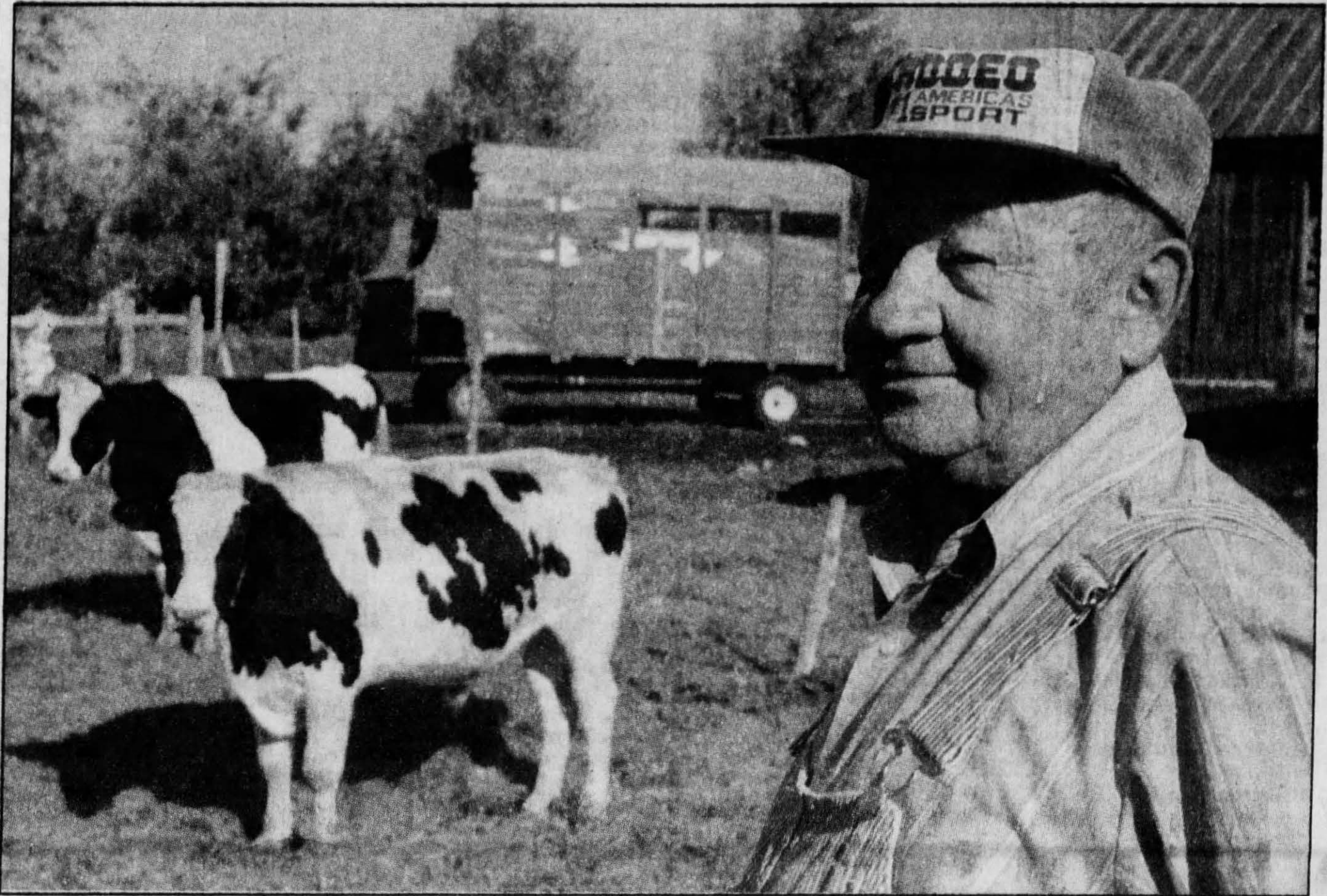


This week's community profile: Slovan



On the farm: Wilfred Sisel still raises cattle at his Slovan farm in Kewaunee County but it's just for a

hobby. He is retired now after farming his entire life in the area.

A place to farm, work, dance

By Gary Dodge

Press-Gazette

SLOVAN — Sunday is polka time in Slovan.

About 150 people gather at the Slovan Country Inn at Kewaunee County Highways E and T for polkas and waltzes.

People here "farm and work and dance," says Wilfred Sisel, 73, Route 3, Kewaunee.

Press-Gazette photos by Joan Gutheridge

The dances are a break from a week of hard work, he says.

The music is performed by local bands who write their own songs, says Fenton Wiericks, co-owner of the inn.

"We've had bands from Czechoslovakia who came over here to visit," he says.

This Kewaunee County community in the town of Casco is home to the Casco Town Hall. The Kewaunee River runs nearby.

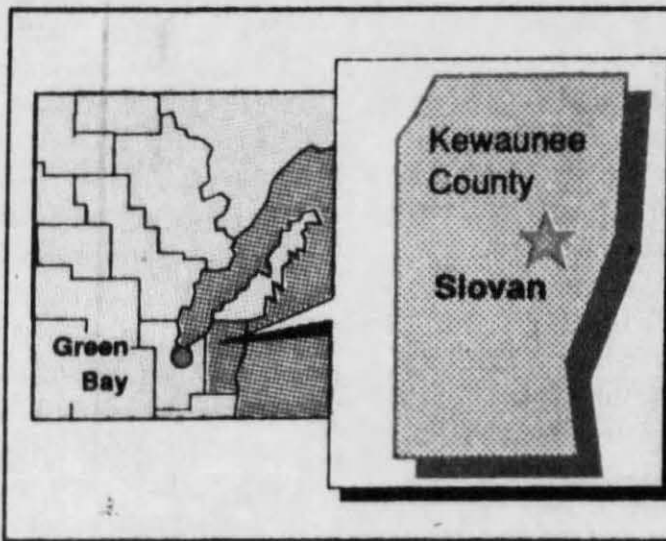
The building housing Wierick's business was once the Hometown Ballroom where people were charged a dime admission for dances, Sisel says.

The building, now renovated, once housed a post office, store, tavern and hotel, he says.

"This place (Slovan Country Inn building) has always been the focal point of the community," says Donald Delebreau, 58, E3659 County Highway T.

The inn also draws about 180 people from surrounding communities for Friday trout boils, says Janet Wiericks, Fenton's wife.

Slovan was once a beehive of activity.



It had a grade school, a cheese factory, blacksmith shop and shoemaker's shop.

In 1922, the longest bridge — more than 400 feet — in Kewaunee County was built on Church Road. Crews are building a replacement bridge, says Earl Opicka, 75, Route 3, Kewaunee.

A nearby railroad was built in 1891, serviced by the Green Bay and Western Railroad Co. and the Ahnapee and Western Railroad Co., he says.

The stable near the Slovan Country Inn and several barns were blown over in a 1908 tornado, Opicka says.

Sports was big, including boxing, basketball and wrestling, says Sisel, who threw a punch demonstrating how he won the 118-pound Golden Gloves title in Two Rivers when he was in his early 20s.

The community held Trinity Sunday celebrations in June and harvest festivals in the fall. It also held raffle shoots for geese and duck. Those ended about 20 years ago.

The community's closeness hasn't

The Slovan file

- ☐ **Population:** About 30.
- ☐ **Name it:** "The settlement was established by immigrants from Czechoslovakia who named it after a place in their former country," according to *The Romance of Wisconsin Place Names*.
- ☐ **Founded:** The first settlers arrived in 1855.
- ☐ **Religion:** About 100 area residents attend St. Adalbert's Catholic Church.

changed much over the years. Slovan is still a closely woven settlement, residents say.

"It's an old-time neighborhood," says Delebreau, who retired recently from the Kewaunee County Sheriff's Department after 26 years.

Edith Urban, a cook at the Slovan Country Inn, says she traded in the bright lights of Nashville and a country music career for Slovan's slow pace.

Urban joined the *Hee Haw* show 20 years ago and spent 10 years in the country music trade.

She says she quit when her husband, Urban Urban, who's originally from Slovan, got tired of having her gone on tours.

"I still sit in with different (local) bands and we have a lot of fun," Edith Urban says. "I don't miss the big city life. I miss the music."

■ **Next week:** Sister Bay in Door County



What's cookin': Edith Urban, left, and Erma Sisel prepare food in the kitchen at the Slovan Country Inn, where they are cooks. About 150 people gather at the dance hall on Sundays for polkas and waltzes. "This place has always been the focal point of the community," said resident Donald Delebreau. The inn also serves trout boils on Fridays.